

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0241

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, SF, AO

SUBJ: ANGOLA: CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN MULLER

1. LAST NIGHT FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD ME THAT SAG IS GIVING SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO PULLING OUT ALL ITS FORCES FROM ANGOLA. HE EXPRESSED SPECIAL INTEREST IN KNOWING WHEN SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON ANGOLA-NAMIBIA WOULD BEGIN, OBSERVING THAT IF THERE WERE NO SAG TROOPS IN ANGOLA, THERE WOULD BE NO NEED FOR A UNSC SESSION. I ASKED WHETHER I SHOULD INFER FROM THIS THAT SAG WAS CONSIDERING THIS ACTION IN ABSENCE OF UNDERSTANDING WITH MPLA ON CONSTRUCTION AND USE OF CUNENE - CALUEQUE WORKS. MULLER DID NOT GIVE A CATEGORIC ANSWER BUT IMPLIED THAT FACED WITH PROSPECT OF UNSC CONDEMNATION AND APPLICATION OF CHAPTER VII, SAG MIGHT CONSIDER LESSER OF TWO EVILS WOULD BE TO RETIRE FORCES BEHIND THE FRONTIER AND TAKE THEIR CHANCES OF BEING ALLOWED TO COMPLETE WORK ON HYDROELECTRIC-IRRIGATION PROJECTS.

2. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION ABOUT PROGRESS WHICH SAG MIGHT BE MAKING IN ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH MPLA, MULLER INITIALLY SOUGHT TO FEND OFF QUESTION BY ASKING HOW WE WERE DOING IN THIS AREA. HE MENTIONED POSSIBLE
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MORAN VISIT AWAITING "SOME KIND OF COMMUNICATION" FROM

THE DEPARTMENT. I EXPLAINED THAT DEPARTMENT HAD PLACED NO OBSTACLES IN WAY OF MORAN MAKING TRIP IF HE WANTED TO GO BUT I DID NOT FORESEE THE DEPARTMENT ISSUING THE COMMUNICATION HE REFERRED TO. MULLER WENT ON TO SAY THAT SAG IS WORKING THROUGH ZAIRE TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH MPLA BUT DECLINED TO SPELL THIS OUT, COMMENTING "THIS IS A VERY DELICATE MATTER AND I PROBABLY SHOULD NOT HAVE TOLD YOU THAT MUCH."

3. WITH REGARD TO REFUGEE PROBLEM, MULLER SAID THAT THERE ARE LESS THAN 200 SAG TROOPS INVOLVED IN THIS OPERATION. HE NOTED THAT SAG HAD JUST ABOUT REACHED A DECISION TO SEND AN "ULTIMATUM" TO THE UN SAYING THAT BY A GIVEN DATE SOUTH AFRICA WOULD STOP ITS ASSISTANCE. (SEE MY CONVERSATION WITH PM VORSTER ON THIS POINT, CAPE TOWN 0169.) WHAT IS HOLDING THEM BACK, HE SAID, IS FEAR OF A WORLD HUE AND CRY IF SAG ABANDONED THESE PITIFUL PEOPLE AS WELL AS DANGER THAT TERRORISTS WOULD DESCEND ON CAMPS AND EXPLOIT THEM.

4. COMMENT: UNLIKE PM VORSTER AND DFA SECRETARY FOURIE, MULLER IS GENERALLY EVASIVE IN DISCUSSING SENSITIVE ISSUES. LAST NIGHT HE CAME CLOSER TO BEING CANDID. READING BETWEEN THE LINES, I GATHER THAT THE SAG IS STILL WORKING HARD TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE MPLA IN AN EFFORT TO WORK OUT SOME UNDERSTANDING REGARDING CUNENE-CALUEQUE. IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE BEFORE THE UNSC DEBATE ON SA TROOP PRESENCE IN ANGOLA, SAG IS SERIOUSLY WEIGHING PULLING ITS FORCES OUT TO AVOID FURTHER CONDEMNATION AND POSSIBLE SANCTIONS. BOWDLER

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